
Equipping Men for Impact

by Craig Chval

"If you play a man's game, men will come to play" Leroy Eims, The Navigators

As part of the pastoral leadership team at The Crossing, (a rapidly growing Evangelical Presbyterian church in Columbia, Missouri), Dave Cover knew exactly what he needed – and wanted – for the men of his church.

How to provide that was less clear.

Owing in part to his many years of previous service as campus director of Campus Crusade for Christ at the University of Missouri, Cover had a strong sense of the importance of discipleship for men. He also had a



**Dave Cover, lead pastor at
The Crossing**

strong sense of just how demanding true disciple-making often is. And, of course, he knew full well the many other demands faced by pastors and church leaders.

So when long-time friend, Nav staff Larry Glabe, suggested the possibility of making available on a regular basis a staff member from The Navigators to help develop a disciple-making ministry for men at The

Crossing, Cover felt a little bit like he had found himself in the famous scene from *The Godfather* – the recipient of an offer he couldn't refuse.

"How do I sign up?" is how Cover describes his reaction to Glabe's offer. "It was almost too good to be true."

"As men go, so goes the church," Cover proclaims. "I've always been frustrated with the lack of men's discipleship focus within the church. It seemed like it (the church at large) was real focused on hiring pastors, and the pastors did ministry and people attended those programs."

That was not what Glabe had in mind for a ministry to men.

In over three decades of service with The Navigators, Glabe has watched many churches approach men's ministry as a series of seemingly unrelated events or activities. As Glabe's friend and mentor, Ron Bennett, (regional director for The Navigators Church Discipleship Ministry) observes, "Most men's ministries rely on current Christian topics for their plan. Yet most churches – and their men's ministries – have as their mission statement an expression of the Great Commission to make disciples of Christ.

"But the challenge comes when asked, 'How does your men's ministry describe a disciple of Christ?'" Bennett says, "If we can't describe it clearly, we wind up shooting an arrow at the side of a barn and then painting a target around it, announcing with confidence, 'Look, we hit the bull's-eye.' Our goal becomes to produce whatever we have."

Begin with the end in view.

Bennett, Glabe, and their team within The Navigators' Church Discipleship Ministry (CDM) have a very clear vision for their target – producing disciples who embody Christ-like character. They are committed to an approach to men's ministry that is built upon the clear objective of helping men grow as disciples of Christ through an intentional process. Through CDM, they are making available to churches The Navigators' Men's Ministry Blueprint,

Building A Discipling Culture From The Ground Up. The Blueprint provides a roadmap for developing a disciple-making culture that is relational, transformational, missional and generational.

While the Blueprint only existed in the minds of

Bennett and Glabe at the time, it was the heart of what they offered

Cover and The Crossing. The yet-unwritten Blueprint also existed in the mind and heart of Nav staffer Bill Penkethman, who jumped at the opportunity to work with The Crossing.

Penkethman had first encountered Glabe several years previously, and their meeting led Penkethman to a



the  crossing

sobering conclusion.

"I realized that I had a need that I didn't know I had," recalls Penkethman. "I was attending church and I was involved in a lot of church activities, but I was not a disciple; I didn't even know what that meant. I had the idea that being a disciple was a special calling within the church—kind of like the Green Berets. But Jesus makes no distinction between a disciple and a follower."

Once Glabe helped Penkethman achieve that realization, Penkethman was determined to remedy the situation.

"Larry identified my situation and he had a way to address it," Penkethman says.

As Glabe was addressing Penkethman's need to be discipled, Penkethman recognized the call to share with other men what Glabe was sharing with him – 2 Timothy 2:2 personified. *And these things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men, who will also be qualified to teach others.*

"Like me, most of the men at my church were running in place spiritually," says Penkethman.

But as he attempted to share what he was learning, he became aware that he lacked the tools. Just around that time, Bennett, Glabe and two other longtime Nav staff – Bob Walz and the late Chuck Strittmatter – were reducing to writing much of what each had been using for decades to disciple other men. As a result the *HighQuest*

The *HighQuest* series is an essential component of a disciple-making culture that is relational, transformational, missional, and generational. As Bennett says, "It's a process by which we can create an environment conducive for discipling."

What does a discipling culture look like?

At The Crossing, that environment has become known as Men of IMPACT: Intentional Men Pursuing A Christlike Transformation. From the Men of IMPACT environment has come changed lives.

"You can see it in their faces, in their demeanor," says Cover. "They see themselves as a part of the church and as a part of Men of IMPACT. There is a sense of accountability and men understand they're expected by one another to attend."

Penkethman, who joined The Navigator staff

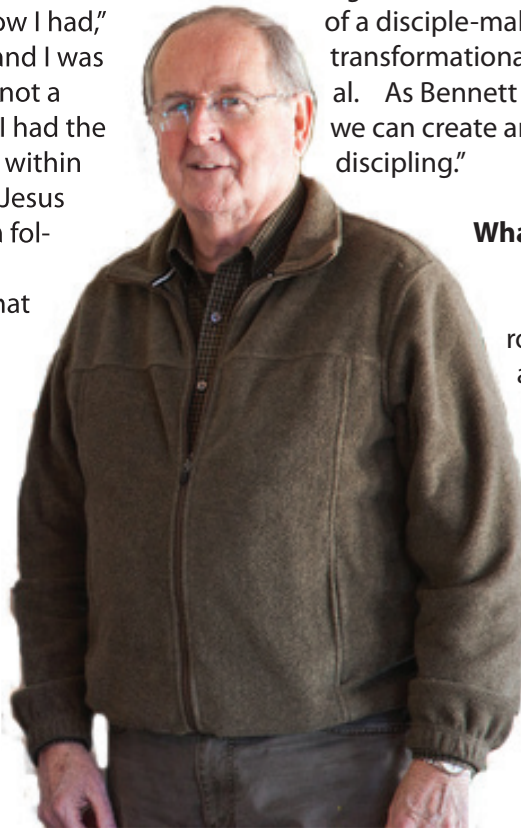
at age 70 after a successful business career, leaves no question as to what awaits men who choose to participate in Men of IMPACT. Highlighting The Navigators' bedrock pursuits of knowing Christ deeply, reflecting Christ authentically and sharing Christ intentionally, men are provided with a clear profile, a process and a pathway. The profile is a Biblical definition of a disciple. The process is a series of stages through which a man progresses from a new believer to a mature, reproducing disciple. And the pathway consists of the practical steps, programs, tools and events that the ministry offers to allow men to move along in the process of spiritual growth.

As Penkethman says, "Men who commit to this program will experience personal, spiritual transformation and will learn how to assist other men in their spiritual journeys."

"We're seeing more and more men in the foyer of the church, talking with one another, forming supportive networks" says Cover.

It has become clear over time that the Men of IMPACT has thrived at the The Crossing because of the common vision of Glabe, the leadership at The Crossing, and Penkethman.

"Many men's ministries measure success in terms of numbers of participants," says Penkethman, reciting the



Bill Penkethman leads the Men of IMPACT at The Crossing in Columbia, MO.

Men are provided with a clear profile, process, and pathway.

Discipleship Series was born: a tool that helps "disciplers" create discipling cultures.

Comprised of nine journals that are aligned into three "tracks," the *HighQuest* series is a tool that helps "disciplers" create discipling cultures in order to disciple men. The series enables men to develop consistency in the Word and then guides groups of 4-5 men through weekly discussions. The focus is on what they're learning during their daily "Appointments with God" and how they're applying those lessons to their lives at home, in the workplace, and in the world.



all-too-familiar recipe of an annual men's retreat, the occasional breakfast and hit-and-miss small groups. "I measure success in terms of transformation."

Penkethman began establishing small groups of men and teaching them how to use the *HighQuest* materials. Initially, each group of four men met wherever and whenever it was most convenient for the men in that group, but Penkethman was still not seeing the environment – or the transformation – he sought. So he changed the format to a centralized one, requiring each group to convene at The Crossing at 6:00 a.m. each Friday morning – not the easiest "sell" in the world. But the switch had its desired effect; men began attending and participating consistently. Soon, men were hungry for more.

"Two things began to happen," relates Penkethman. "The ministry began to grow inside The Crossing, and it began to expand outside The Crossing."

Cover has observed the change in men's lives. "They know they belong here, they know they have a mission and they're excited about it. They're excited about the relationships they have with other men and they're excited about recruiting other men to be a part."

"And that's a different man than the one who's coming to church, looking at his watch, thinking about the Rams game, and the golf he is missing. His heart's not there, his ambition's not there, his focus isn't there," continues Cover. "He is the kind of man who attends church but does not understand the mission of the kingdom."

Evidence abounds that participants in The Crossing's Men of IMPACT are embracing the mission of the kingdom. Not only are more and more men consistently participating in the ministry, but their actions inside and outside the walls of the church reflect hearts committed to God.

"That's the result of men being involved," says Penkethman. "They develop a heart for God and for ministry – they want to take this where they know it's needed."

Thus far, Penkethman and the Men of IMPACT have taken *HighQuest* and the disciple-making environment into the marketplace, into other churches and even into a correctional facility. Penkethman also uses *HighQuest* materials as part of his ongoing efforts to establish and support disciple-making cultures in Guatemala. Men from The Crossing have joined those efforts as well.

Pastors need to empower key men.

Cover views Penkethman as a great blessing to the

men and the people of The Crossing. "He has a real sense of coming alongside us as a co-worker," says Cover. "He wants to serve the men of this church for the sake of the Gospel."

However, as grateful as Cover is for his longstanding friendship with Glabe and the devoted service of Penkethman, he firmly believes that a church can effectively establish a disciple-making culture using the *HighQuest* series and the Blueprint components, even without the ongoing direct assistance of a Nav staffer.



Pastors Dave Cover and Shay Roush talking with Nav staff Bill Penkethman at The Crossing

In his view, all that is needed is a team of key men who have, first of all, an active faith, a walk with Christ, love the Word and love to disciple men. And second, men who are committed to the *HighQuest* materials and the Blueprint. Cover continues by challenging pastors to empower these key men by giving them support and encouragement.

Process is not a formula.

The *HighQuest* materials are essential, as Cover sees it. "Not to make it sound formulaic, because it's not. But if you match a good system of materials with a man who is respected by other men and who has a walk with Christ, I think that's what you need to make disciples in the church."

Ultimately this material gets men into the Bible and develops a foundation of walking by faith and learning to feed themselves in the Word.

Once that happens, the principle of spiritual generations described in 2 Timothy 2:2 has a chance to take hold, as Cover is witnessing at The Crossing.

"I think what Paul is saying is that there's a network of relationships that are vital to any growing church," he says. "Men are mentoring others as well as being mentored. If you don't have that going on in the church, you don't have disciples being made."

Cover wasn't certain what to expect when Penkethman begin his partnership with The Crossing, and he isn't certain what the future holds – but he knows it will be fruitful because great things happen when the Spirit of

God is moving in the lives of men.

"All I know is that when men are excited about the Bible, excited about the cause of Christ in their lives, and in the lives of other men," says Cover, "there is no limit to what the Spirit of God can do."



Men at The Crossing meeting at 6:00 a.m. for their *HighQuest* Forums.

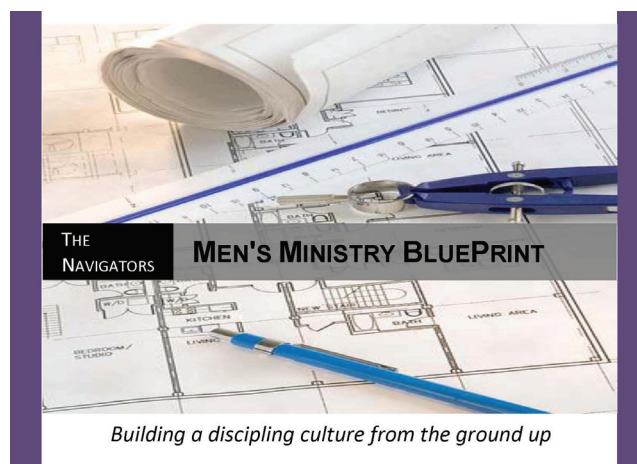
HIGHQUEST

Discipleship Series

www.highquest.info

The HighQuest Series is designed as a 3-dimensional discipling tool. It develops the vertical relationship with God (Knowing Christ Deeply), the inner relationship of transformation (Reflecting Christ Authentically), and the outward relationship with others (Sharing Christ Intentionally).

HighQuest can be used as a spiritual mentoring platform for building mature, reproducing disciples or as a core, 1-2 year discipling curriculum in a men's or women's ministry. The HighQuest series develops the convictions, character and skills foundational to a lifetime of following Christ.



The Men's Ministry BluePrint is a coaching process for leaders of men's ministries who want to move from a program paradigm to a process model.

For more information contact Ron Bennett at email: navmmblueprint@gmail.com

